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Introduction

Human Trafficking (HT) literature identifies restricted or narrowly focused funding and difficulty with the coordination of services for HT survivors. This focus group study attempts to discern service strengths and issues at the local level in Lee and Collier counties in Southwest Florida. A three step grounded theory process was utilized in order to analyze the focus group data. The unprecedented level of survivor need was theorized to strain the existing services network. HT cases expose less organized parts of the service network which highlights a lack of organized funding sources and less efficiency. The addition of an essential fourth P (partnership), to prevention, protection and prosecution efforts, would guide efforts toward more evolved service networks. Suggestions include creation of a state level entity which can manage a regionally coordinated case management system, and the establishment of a clearinghouse for data and research.

Literature Review

The argument can be advanced that HT survivors present to social services and law enforcement agencies and their respective community, national and international systems with a scope and urgency of need that is unprecedented in modern history. Certainly, the long list of immediate, medium term and long term needs of survivors (Dewan 2014; Surtees and De Kerchove 2014) might stress any agency and associated service network attempting to protect and prosecute at the same time. Also, law enforcement and social service networks are still evolving service networks. Local and international communities both struggle to organize partnerships between law enforcement, funding sources and social services (Newcomb 2014). The same certainly holds true in the United States.

In addition to partnership challenges, there is currently a lack of research with which to make policy, enforcement and case management decisions. As of 2010, only six percent of scholarly literature on HT was both “empirical and peer reviewed” (Potocky 2010, p. 374). As HT awareness develops for law enforcement, shared intelligence is still significantly an inefficient process between agencies (Friesendorf 2009). Additionally, one content analysis suggests that information available to the public, at least in the United States, mostly serves to give salience to the consensus views on HT in Washington (Gulati 2011). Yet, special interest groups and ideology play a significant part in the development of policy (Potocky 2010). Finally, information about how services are currently provided for survivors by the networks of social services agencies remains limited (Newcomb 2011).

HT services are still evolving, and competition among non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) and emerging faith-based organizations (FBO’s) for scarce resources has limited organizational strategies. Available grant funding is often limited in scope and “big picture” vision, and is often tied to political interests. All of this currently limits the ability of NGO’s and FBO’s to coordinate efforts systemically at international and national levels (Foerster 2009).

Systemic problems abound given the current issues. Typical issues at present include insufficient levels of resources, inadequate capacity, and lack of specialized knowledge and expertise. Additionally, disorganized and narrowly focused funding, difficulty with identification of actual victims and then assisting the victims to be motivated for services while maintaining confidentiality are consistent challenges (Caliber Associates 2007). Arguably, a more organized and centralized effort might mitigate many of these concerns, especially with continued oversight.

Given the unprecedented level of survivors need for multiple services, the current difficulties in partnering on local, national and international levels, and the

bias of current information flow, what will the network of prevention, protection and prosecution services evolve into in the United States? This article will focus on how the underlying regional processes in the United States will benefit from a state level system of organization, which addresses regionally different occurrences of trafficking (sex trafficking or labor trafficking), significantly different demographics and socio-economic pockets, and dynamics consistent with local emphasis on minor or adult trafficking. It is proposed that the processes underlying the provision of services are very similar, and an organizing principle, which surmounts process level problems, is needed.

Methodology

In an effort to assess the process issues of the local service network in Lee and Collier counties, Florida, the graduate students from the Hodges University Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program conducted a focus group study of community law enforcement agencies and social service providers in both Lee and Collier Counties, Florida. Faculty leadership provided the training and supervision for a systematic set of three focus groups: one for social service providers in Collier County, two for social service providers in Lee County, and one for law enforcement personnel from both counties.

The study was undertaken in order to assist the Southwest Florida Regional Coalition against Human Trafficking. At a Coalition Board meeting, feedback was elicited in order to focus the question set. The key participants were social services focus groups; as a result, questions were designed to elicit requested information concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the current service system and the Coalition's support of local agencies and services.

Focus groups ran for one and one half hours each. Two students acted as group facilitators for each group and were responsible for ensuring that the functions of the group were carried out in an ethical manner. There were four student recorders per group, except in Collier County, where there were two. Recorders wrote down each data statement from a participant as they understood it, and at the end of the group that evening, the recorders met and developed a consensus document which covered all data statements documented by each recorder.

Students then conducted a three-step grounded theory analysis process. Students were only minimally trained in HT issues prior to the focus groups, and students were trained to facilitate groups and record with as little personal bias as possible. Faculty led the three-step grounded theory analysis and monitored the discussion for bias and presupposition of how information should be interpreted.

After analysis, the faculty gathered the information and clarified, by meeting with the students, that the results and interpretations developed were consistent with the students' analysis. The qualitative analysis generated both information and recommendations for the Southwest Florida Coalition against Human Trafficking and a theory about the current state of evolution of the local service network including local, regional and state level recommendations based upon that theory. A presentation of the data results and discussion was held with community providers, who were focus group participants, and there were no significant objections to what was found or to the developed theory and recommendations.

Results

There were $n=274$ total data statements from 16 participants. The Collier County social service group had three participants, and two Lee County social service groups had six and seven. Collected data statements for the social services groups were analyzed in aggregate. The student analysis contained all data statements within twelve general categories (see Appendix, Table 1). Students then analyzed relationships between the categories and outlined the process of community services based on the categories. Next, students identified the key categories which were the underlying drivers of the process as it appeared from the data (see Appendix, Table 2). Students were able to choose more than one category, and they were not limited to choosing categories with higher amounts of data responses. Significantly, the complexity of needs of HT survivors was identified as the main underlying theme shared by focus group participants. The next two categories that students identified were funding and collaboration challenges. While the number of comments about funding was low, the specific comments identified funding as a key process problem. Awareness of HT in the community and the need for more specialized HT services were next. Finally, resource challenges, community advocacy, issues with law, and gaps in services were themes that emerged from participant statements.

There was no video recording, so the accurate data collection of statements was dependent on the memory of all recorders by consensus. Also, faculty and students totaled seventeen for the social services analysis. While faculty were present for all three-step grounded theory analysis, some students missed certain parts of the analysis, and not all were present for each discussion. However, the vast majority were present.

The study received International Review Board (IRB) approval in advance, and the actual methodology and data analysis were carried out in the course of fifteen weeks, or one semester. This limited any follow-up focus groups, and the study was dependent on the data collected over the fifteen weeks.

Discussion

The current system of protection and service protocols among HT interests nationally and globally is plagued by a lack of organization and by difficulty forming collaborative efforts among case management, law enforcement, NGO's and FBO's dedicated to HT efforts (Foerster 2009; Newcomb 2014; Potocky 2010). At first glance, service coordination appears to be most affected by the current gaps in collaboration efforts. However, the current focus group qualitative data analysis revealed that, at least on the local level, the complexity of survivor needs could explain the system breakdown. The unprecedented needs of trafficking survivors overwhelm the current system, which was not designed for a smaller group of extremely high-need survivors. The organization and systemic use of funding and the collaboration between agencies of all kinds on the local level are more completely evolved for other services, such as domestic violence. The current and as yet incomplete evolution of the local HT network is exposed by the unprecedented level of survivor need, perhaps significantly explaining the identified funding and collaboration issues found in the literature and the study data.

The evolution of the service network can be enhanced by an approach which encompasses the understanding of the unprecedented and complex trauma and psychosocial needs HT victims present. Based on the themes obtained from community provider feedback in this study, there is a need for a more centrally organized effort. HT efforts can be further specialized toward a model which is both victim and community system centered. The three P model (prevention, protection and prosecution) can be superimposed on the community system within the context of partnership, an essential fourth P. The research conducted locally validated the need for better coordination of all three levels of action in the community system. The fourth P, partnership, encompasses the actions of the three P's. Disorganized and multi-effort funding, and independent law enforcement and agency efforts necessitate a level of competition inconsistent with the needs of trafficking survivors. High need trafficking survivors require a coordinated partnership of law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, NGO's, FBO's and other support entities such as universities.

In order to best resolve current competition and resultant disorganization of funding and service, it is helpful to review how a similar social issue evolved from this point in its development to a more coordinated level of partnership.

Domestic violence services are significantly different than HT services in some ways. Yet, the evolution of an operational definition of the term, clear and consistent law enforcement guidelines and training, and a centrally organized service network are as essential to the efficiency of domestic violence services as

they are to HT services. In Florida, the Florida Coalition against Domestic Violence (FCADV) and Florida Council against Sexual Violence (FCASV) provide state level coordination and certification for forty-two domestic violence shelters. The FCADV and FCASV foundations provide a central source of funding for domestic violence and sexual assault services, in concert with other sources. FCADV and FCASV also provide public policy development and advocacy, and central training services (FCADV n.d). Services for domestic violence in Florida evolved through similar circumstances, beginning with grassroots efforts at a time of low public awareness and understanding of the problem.

State level efforts must play a significant role in organizing and directing HT services in order to meet the unprecedented need in the most efficient way. To accomplish this, the level of complexity at which HT presents must first be taken into consideration. The primary proposed objective would be to enhance interagency collaborations and to develop a comprehensive, culturally-competent and coordinated network of wraparound services that will address the individualized needs of trafficking victims and identify gaps in services. Coordinated and centralized funding efforts would systemically impel the collaboration.

A significant difference between domestic violence and HT is in how the services can be organized. Domestic violence services can essentially be organized in the shelter model with a peripheral referral network. This is more of a “one stop shop” approach that is not yet appropriate given the current state of HT services in all regions (Caliber Associates, 2007, p.25). HT cases are too few in number to fund a large centralized agency at the current state of community service evolution. In a separate effort in 2013, Hodges University Master in Clinical Mental Health Counseling program students compiled a reference manual of all agencies and other groups involved in the HT effort in Lee and Collier counties, Florida. Through consensus, students organized the manual to utilize the following service categories: emergency shelter, intensive case management, specialized counseling services, services enhancing independence, and prevention services. Of these categories, The Caliber Associates (2007) found case management to be the most prominent service across three different models of service, with legal services, medical and dental services, interpreters/translators, education and job training, and mental health services as the most prominent needs in general. Given the large number of entities involved (as compared to domestic violence services), it is also proposed that a “mini” United Way model could coordinate funding and services statewide much as a local United Way coordinates funding for services across the spectrum of community need. In this way, funding and coordinated service is efficiently delivered despite a multitude of community services and efforts.

Additionally, the entry point into the system for the survivor, with adequate provider training and protocol awareness, could be centered on the “no wrong door” model (Caliber Associates 2007, p.25). Cooperation would allow for the engagement of coordinated services no matter how the survivor entered the system. Over time, with centralized coordination and continually improved awareness of local protocols, a one-stop shop model could emerge as services evolved (Caliber Associates 2007).

The cycle of the proposed four P’s to success model when centrally organized at the state level should lead to prevention programs that will increase awareness, education, and training programs within different levels of any given community. The four P’s to success will also create a systematic approach to HT to identify, to intervene, and to assist with the effective prosecution of trafficking cases. The model would also provide a continuum of care for victims’ needs by developing one central set of policies and protocols that would identify the roles, responsibilities and referral requirements for providers of victim services to enhance the quality and quantity of comprehensive and wraparound services available to victims of HT. Below, prevention, protection and prosecution are considered in more detail from an integrated statewide partnership of coordinated community systems set in geographic areas much like a domestic violence shelter covers a specific geographic area within the state.

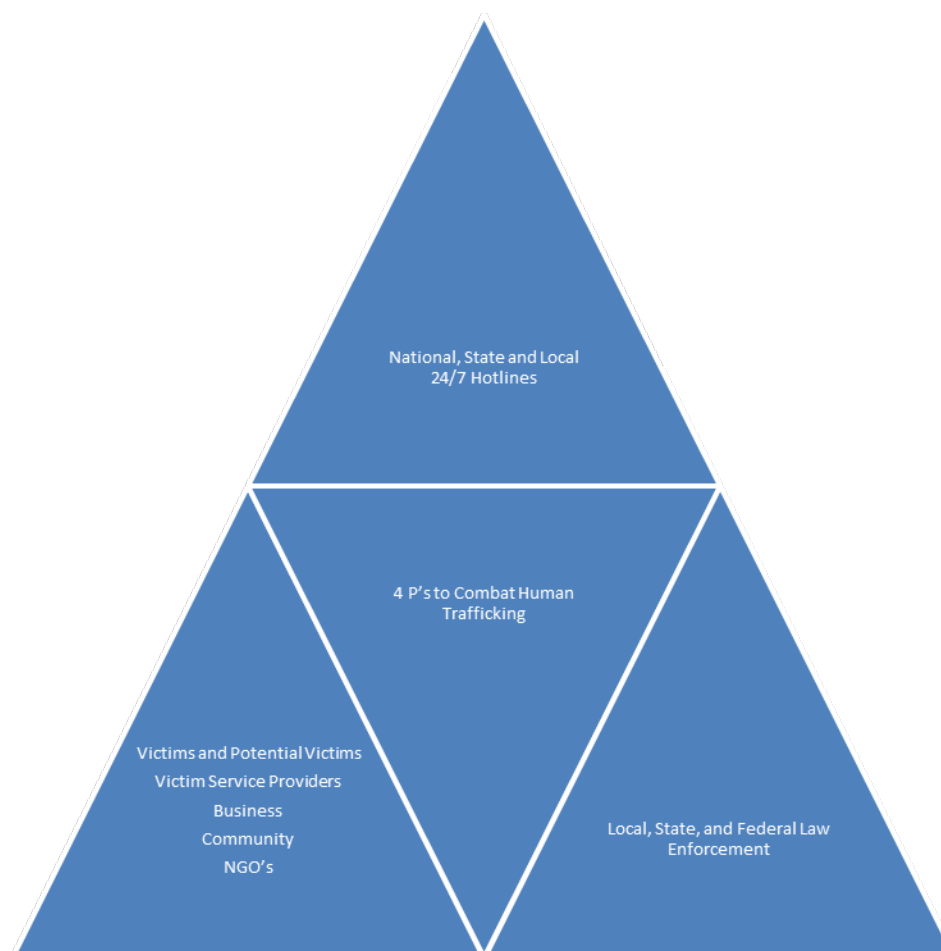


Figure 1 , © Yaroslaba Garcia 2015

Prevention

Prevention efforts should receive wide coverage due to the different ways in which HT can emerge and change within a region. The specific efforts might target different populations or efforts within a state due to local characteristics, yet the overall effort can concentrate on certain vital areas in each region. However, the nature of the effort might change within each region. Dewan (2014) found that the majority of internationally trafficked persons in their sample were identified by law enforcement or NGO's. While we would expect these entities to play a central role, prevention services aimed at health care, hospitality merchants and other businesses and entities will widen the identification and referral network for trafficking cases (Caliber Associates 2007).

Prevention efforts aimed toward minors and vulnerable adults should be geared directly towards programs that work with individuals who fit certain

demographics or characteristics which make them more vulnerable. For example, one urban area might focus on local malls and teen exposure to traffickers, while another more rural area might focus on agricultural workers of lower socioeconomic status.

At the same time, prevention efforts can be directed towards awareness and understanding of the crime and toward victim identification for the community at large. This aspect of prevention is specifically important because the shifting strategies of traffickers make it difficult for any society to plan a consistent strategy. Prevention efforts focused on the community at large involve concrete and specific education of how HT will expose itself in the community. Common misconceptions have to be explained, and factual examples of relevant cases concretized. It is also critical to personalize education to the age group, community, and culture to which the information is provided.

Law enforcement and first responder specific trainings are also critical at the regional level. Due to the complexity of the crime, this level of prevention requires that law enforcement officers understand how HT operates within other crimes. The typical and understandable challenge to surmount is a tendency for “victim service providers ‘putting the victim first’ and law enforcement being perceived as ‘putting the case first’ “(Caliber Associates 2007, p.35). Training should focus on providing strategies for gathering HT specific intelligence that can assist law enforcement in recognizing, responding, investigating and successfully interviewing victims and perpetrators. Interview methods are best accomplished with officers trained in a victim-centered approach sensitive to complex trauma victims. This approach will increase the chances of successful prosecution.

Prevention efforts require an infrastructure of protocols to be in place that professionals, NGO’s, FBO’s, and law enforcement can follow to report the crime. These efforts must take into consideration the other three P’s by creating a regional infrastructure, supported by state level coordination, which can provide protection, and at the same time lead to prosecution, by forming strong partnerships that are maintained over time. Prevention protocols can be conceptualized in a triangle shape with the four P’s in the middle. (see Figure 1). At the bottom left of the triangle reside the NGO and FBO agencies, businesses, and social services that will be trained to follow the protocol. The right bottom side of the triangle contains law enforcement agencies already trained to accept the calls from the left bottom side of the triangle. At the top of the prevention triangle is an array of services that provide coordinated shelter, emergency housing, food, clothing, medical and mental health needs. The coordination can be provided by a state level hotline that can connect the bottom of the triangle to the services needed.

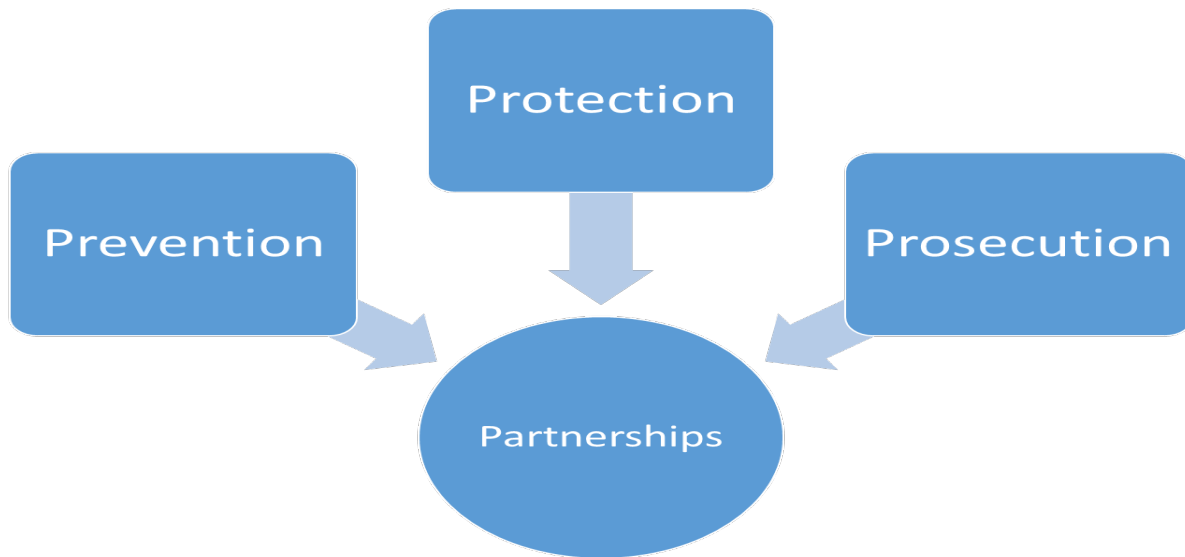


Figure 2
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Protection and Prosecution

For the protection aspect of the four P's to succeed in coordinating HT services, it has to be survivor-centered in all aspects. Immediate efforts must safeguard survivor security as the needs that any survivor may present are addressed. Best practices in protection will lead service providers to establish strong regional and state level partnerships with law enforcement and also with each other, which will establish collaborations that lead to successful prosecution. A coordinated statewide funding effort reduces competition and increases coordinated services. Adequate and solid protection services require durable, steady, partnership, which is the proposed fourth P. Protection can only exist in partnership with law enforcement of different jurisdictions, prosecutors and other NGO's that get involved in assisting with survivor welfare at different stages of their journey.

Sound protection starts with proper attitude training for first responders. Coordinated training sets the basis for how the victim may react and feel about future law enforcement and in some instances their experience with an NGO and/or FBO. Also, as previously discussed, protection efforts need to include a best practice, survivor-centered interview process which takes complex trauma into account. Inter-agency and law enforcement cooperation is critical because the process of internal disclosure, which includes development of trust over a long period of time, conflicts with many law enforcement and agency protocols and resources. Victim interviewing techniques should be directed toward the comfort of

the victim and collaterals with which the victim has developed some level of beginning trust. When protection procedures are consistent, honest, and reliable, the victim can feel supported and encouraged throughout the internal disclosure and prosecution process. This can surmount current difficulties in supporting survivors over time and through difficult legal procedures in order to achieve a greater rate of actual prosecution of traffickers. While Lemming and Caslyn (2004) focused on severe mental illness and homelessness, their findings indicated that social support from professionals and others helping the client to enter the system of services is a crucial variable which might increase the effectiveness of entry into the process. The therapeutic relationship and client engagement were critical. Continued development of specialized HT services and increased community awareness are critical needs. The challenges involved with efficient use of the resources now available also can be explained by the lack of the evolution of the HT service network as compared to a more fully developed community network which addresses a specific social problem. Study results mirror the problems noted in the literature at national and international levels. The processes underlying the actors and regions appear similar, yet significant regional differences will also apply. In the United States, state level coordination could provide for organized regional specialization.

Partnership

If the lack of evolution of HT services combined with unprecedented need does help explain the current state of services, then how might that inform solutions to current dilemmas? First, given that those NGO and FBO actors and law enforcement agencies are attempting to evolve an efficient network, pointing fingers of blame is a less effective strategy than constructing a shared vision and establishing a level of services which increases cooperation and efficiency by “offering centralized core services” (Caliber Associates 2007, p.73). Relatively similar social problems such as domestic violence provide models for how to continue to evolve the three P’s toward more coordinated partnership.

In the meantime, a centrally managed case management service with a small caseload ratio for professional case managers would better organize regional services from the bottom up as an effort to develop state services from the top down also evolves. Too often, study data points to survivors’ needs for immediate help as a factor limiting the ability for specialized providers to efficiently administer their own services. In addition, specialized providers are left to also conduct case management services. This is a very inefficient use of their time and skills. However, the urgent and multiple need survivors impel a *first things first* approach. Focused and organized regional case management services could assess

complex needs and refer to specialized services when the survivor is ready (Caliber Associates 2007). Services could evolve more quickly to a *no wrong door* approach if one centralized case management entity existed that all law enforcement and providers in the community were aware of and with which service linkages had already been established. Services could better flow along Maslow's Hierarchy of Need. Also, universities or other appropriate entities can provide a clearinghouse for data gathering, and expanded and more organized research in the HT arena.

Essentially, given unprecedented level of need demonstrated by trafficking survivors, and the current state of the evolution of the services network, all interested parties can work to put their own survival fears and special interests to use to craft regional coalitions which meet the need for coordinated funding and services for HT survivors. However, putting competitive interests aside is somewhat unrealistic unless a central coordinating entity at state level eventually provides logical funding distribution mechanisms and continued oversight of the regional efforts to preserve the quality of coordination and delivery of service.

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Appendix Table 1

Stage 1 Analysis: Categories created in order to organize the data statements

Category containing data statements	Number of data statements
Collaboration Challenges	43
Complexity of Survivor's Needs	37
Specialized HT Services	30
Awareness of HT (Strengths)	29
Awareness of HT (Weaknesses)	26
Resource Challenges and Lacks	24
Training	24
Collaboration Strengths	17
Gaps	14
Law Issues	14
Community Advocacy	7
Funding Issues	6

Appendix Table 2

Stage 2 Analysis: Consensus on key parts of the process of services

Category chosen	Number who selected the category as key
Complexity of Survivors Needs	8
Funding	4
Collaboration Challenges	4
Community Awareness	3
Need for Specialized Services	3
Resource Challenges	2
Community Advocacy	1
Issue with Law	1
Gaps in Services	1